

# ***National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week***

***Co-sponsored by: National Coalition for the Homeless and National  
Student Campaign Against Hunger & Homelessness***

***November 15-21, 2009***



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### **Introduction**

Each year, as the Thanksgiving holiday approaches, many people take time to consider what they are thankful for, and donate some of their time to those less fortunate. Every year, in the spirit of Thanksgiving and education, the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness co-sponsor National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, one week prior to Thanksgiving. During this week, schools, communities and cities throughout the nation endeavor to bring a greater awareness to the issues of hunger and homelessness. This manual not only serves as a guide to evaluate past efforts, but also as a tool to inspire your community to get involved with National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week!

### ***Why Should You Participate?***

In order to consider participating in National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, you must first consider why the week is so important. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, there are an estimated 3.5 million homeless persons in the United States, and the number is increasing. Participating in National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week not only raises awareness and promotes ending hunger and homelessness in your community, but also strengthens the national endeavor to end hunger and homelessness. The struggles faced by those that lack a home are often lonely and certainly difficult. Bringing attention to the plight of the homeless by participating in this week of awareness may foster greater understanding and solidarity. Events such as hunger banquets and "One Night Without A Home" help people realize the difficulties that the hungry and the homeless face on a daily basis. Approach a community leader about participating in National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week; we must work together to eliminate the myth that homelessness is someone else's problem and embrace the reality that ending homelessness is possible.

## ***When?***

**November 15-21, 2009.** Early planning is important. Begin by enlisting interested individuals, outlining and planning events, and contacting organizations that may be willing to participate and/or offer assistance. The more time you spend brainstorming, planning, and organizing now, the better your week will go in November. If this will be your first time participating in National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, remember that you do not need an event for each day. It might be better to choose one or two events that will be well-planned, focused and vibrant. Hunger and homelessness cannot be eliminated in a week, but a creative, dedicated, and timely effort will contribute greatly to the national endeavor.

## ***How?***

First things first, you need a team. A small, dedicated group of people can create the main planning team, but you will definitely need a larger support system, and you must always be recruiting people by creating an interest in the issues of hunger and homelessness, as well as an interest in the events that you are planning. Most likely you already know people that will be interested in participating, but never be afraid to promote it to other individuals and ask for their assistance. Some people may surprise you. Consider any community that you may be involved with. Even if you have not been active in a particular community, take the initiative to assume a leadership role. Consider any groups that may already be interested in hunger and homelessness issues/programs. It is imperative not only to promote interest, but also to consider all feedback. Discuss the events that you are planning and be open to changes and new ideas.

It is immensely important to know the community that you are working with: children, the elderly, college students, etc., so as to create the events accordingly. After establishing a team, it is important to decide on the logistics as soon as possible. Here is a sample checklist of some, but not all, questions that you will need to answer:

- How many and which events should we plan for?
- When should the events take place?
- How many people should coordinate each event?
- Who should handle publicity?
- What is the best meeting time (preferably weekly) for everyone?
- What community organizations would help us by co-sponsoring the week?
- Who is knowledgeable about organizing events within the community?
- What are creative ways to educate the public on the events and the issue?



## Sample Proclamation

A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING NOVEMBER 15-21, 2009 AS  
NATIONAL HUNGER AND HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS WEEK IN \_\_\_\_\_.

By Your City Council/Mayor/County/Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Proclamation Issued: \_\_\_\_\_

WHEREAS, for the past several years the National Coalition for the Homeless and National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness have sponsored National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the proclamation is to educate the public about the many reasons people are hungry and homeless including the shortage of affordable housing in \_\_\_\_\_ for very low income residents; and to encourage support for homeless assistance service providers as well as community service opportunities for students and school service organizations; and

WHEREAS, there are many organizations committed to sheltering, providing supportive services as well as meals and food supplies to the homeless including: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_; and

WHEREAS, the theme of National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week 2009 is "Bringing America Home," and

WHEREAS, the \_\_\_\_\_ recognize that hunger and homelessness continues to be a serious problem for many individuals and families in \_\_\_\_\_; and

WHEREAS, the intent of National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week is consistent with the activities of \_\_\_\_\_ (local organizations).

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the \_\_\_\_\_ hereby proclaims November 15-21, 2009 as National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the \_\_\_\_\_ encourages all citizens to recognize that many people do not have housing and need support from citizens, and private/public nonprofit service entities.

## Education

In any endeavor, education is key. Be able to speak confidently about why you want to, and why you think your community should, participate in National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. Be aware that statistics do inspire interest; listed below are a number of websites that you can utilize to educate yourself and your public about hunger and homelessness issues. Try to be creative when you educate your public!

National Coalition for the Homeless

<http://www.nationalhomeless.org>

National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness

<http://www.studentsagainsthunger.org>

Videos and books are a great tool with which to educate yourself and the public about hunger and homelessness. Listed below are movies, adult books, and even children's books that focus on the issues of hunger and homelessness.

### Books On the history of homelessness:

Hopper, Kim. Reckoning with Homelessness, 2003.

*A recent history of homelessness in which the author argues for the elimination of homelessness.*

Levinson, David. Homelessness Handbook, 2007.

*The historical aspect of this handbook covers the topics of vagrancy, workhouses, poorhouses, hobo and tramp literature, the great depression and the skid row era. The remaining portion of the book contains research and analysis of the leading historians and social scientists in the field of homelessness. The Homelessness Handbook elucidates, motivates, and empowers—making it the ideal reference for students, professionals, activists, and anyone who needs to understand this vexing social problem.*

### Recent adult books:

LeMieux, Richard. Breakfast at Sally's: One Homeless Man's Inspirational Journey, 10/2008.

*One day, Richard LeMieux had a happy marriage, a palatial home, and took \$40,000 Greek vacations. The next, he was living out of a van with only his dog, Willow, for company. This astonishingly frank memoir tells the story of one man's resilience in the face of economic disaster. Penniless, a failed suicide, estranged from his family, and living "the vehicular lifestyle" in Washington state, LeMieux chronicles his journey from the Salvation Army kitchens to his days with "C"—a philosopher in a homeless man's clothing—to his run-ins with Pastor Bob and other characters he meets on the streets. Along the way, he finds time to haunt public libraries and discover his desire to write.*

*LeMieux's quiet determination and his almost pious willingness to live with his situation are only a part of this politically and socially charged memoir. The real story of an all-too-common American condition, this is a heartfelt and stirring read.*

Street Sense. Street Verses: Poems by the Homeless Writers and Vendors of Street Sense, 3/2007.

*The poems inside this book come from the pages of Street Sense over the course of its first three years of operation. Homeless and formerly homeless men and women, many of who also sell the paper, wrote all of these pieces. While some are directly about homelessness, many are far from this topic and describe love, work, friendship, sorrow and pain. These poems reflect their deepest thoughts, creative dreams, complicated pasts, and immediate needs.*

### Children's books:

Bunting, Eve and Ronald Himler. Fly Away Home. New York: Clarion Books, 2004.

*A homeless boy who lives in an airport with his father, moving from terminal to terminal and trying not to be noticed, is given hope when he sees a trapped bird find its freedom*

Johnson, Jerrilyn J. Mommy, Are We Homeless? Winston-Salem: PSG Printing Services of Greensboro, Inc., 2003.

*This is a story about a young girl whose entire life changes when she becomes homeless. She still goes to the same school, but she now lives in a shelter. She is unaware of the other children like her, until she meets a girl on the school bus one day. They talk and Molly discovers that she is not unique and she makes new friends but also keeps her old ones.*

Kaye, Cathryn B. A Kids' Guide to Hunger & Homelessness : How to Take Action. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., 2007.

*This is a book used to teach children about what causes homelessness. They are also taught what they can do to help the homeless in their neighborhoods. It gives ideas and facts on how to better the current situation.*

### Movies

"Easy Street," 2006.

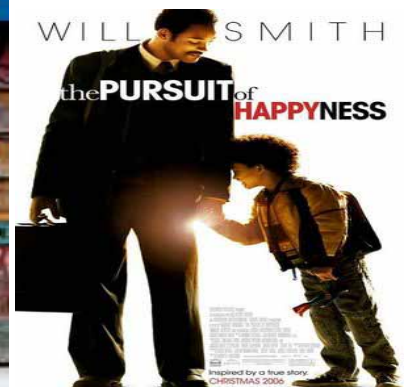
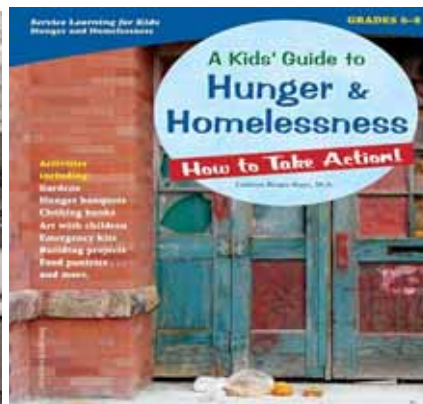
*Easy Street is a feature-length film that documents one year in the lives of homeless people in St. Petersburg, Florida. The viewer sees and hears, first hand, how people scratch out an existence on the streets of America's urban centers. We learn how they got there and what keeps them there. This is a must-see film for anyone who feels compelled to learn more about an underclass of American society whose ranks continue to grow every year.*

"Homeless to Harvard: The Liz Murray Story," 2006.

*At 15, Liz Murray finds herself living on the streets after her mentally ill, drug-addicted parents falter in their attempts to keep their family together. Instead of crumbling, the troubled teen clings to hope and determination, and works her way up out of homelessness— all the way to Harvard University. This three-time Emmy-nominated film is based on an incredible true story.*

"Pursuit of Happyness," 2006.

*A heartwarming film that demonstrates how good, hard-working people can become homeless overnight. This film is a tour-de-force showcase for Will Smith, who convincingly portrays a down-and-out dad trying to better his family's life. A chain of circumstances left Gardner jobless and homeless at age 30, and he found himself and his son living in a bathroom at a San Francisco train station. Despite the negative situation, Gardner continued to fight toward his goal of becoming a broker, and would eventually become a self-made millionaire.*





*The National Coalition for the Homeless highly recommends...*

## **Have You Seen Clem** ***“A True Story... Sorta”***

### **Synopsis:**

Jaymo, an aspiring filmmaker, suddenly finds himself homeless and living out of his car. Desperate to find a way out, he begins shooting a documentary about the overlooked homeless people in this sharply divided society.

When he stumbles across a mysterious bum named Clem, Jaymo realizes that every homeless person has a cart full of secrets and a unique story of personal collapse to tell. Together they embark on a cross-country road trip meeting a cross section of forgotten homeless people that struggle to live on and find contentment on the streets of America.

Their eye-opening journey culminates in Nashville, where Clem seeks his ultimate revenge against the unscrupulous banker who caused his fall from grace. The soundtrack is a riveting mix of original songs performed entirely by the street musicians that the filmmakers met as they traveled across America. (IMDB)

### **Winner:**

*Wine County FF – Marco Island FF – Key West FF – Telluride Indie-fest FF*

### **Official Selection:**

*San Francisco Indie-fest – The Nashville Film Festival*

### **Reviews:**

“It’s a gorgeous, crazy little movie with a big heart that may change your mind about a few things.” – Ted Booth, San Francisco IndieFest

“One of the greatest American independent films ever made...” – Mark Howell Entertainment Editor

“...one of the weirdest and funniest movies ever...” – MovieGuide®

“...destined to become a cult classic.” – Sandy Fletcher, Hollywood Video

“...unconventional...unclassified...niely crafted...” – Variety



**Available from Amazon.com for \$19.99 plus shipping and handling**



## Suggested Activities

Below is a list of suggested events for National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. Please feel free to develop new activities for your unique community. If your idea is a great success, please let us know so that we can share your event with other communities!

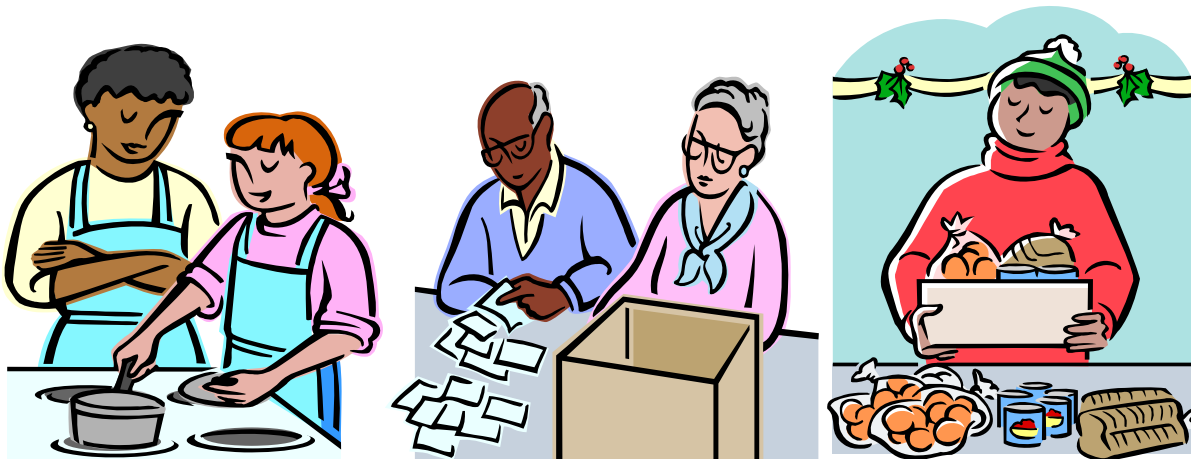
- Organize a “One Night Without a Home” awareness sleep out in front of city hall or on a nearby college campus. (See the detailed description included later in this packet).
- Organize Oxfam America’s *Fast for a World Harvest* in your community to take place during Awareness Week. (See the detailed description included later in this packet).
- Designate one day for community members to skip a meal. Instead of purchasing lunch that day, they can donate the money that they would have spent to hungry people in your community.
- Host educational forums on hunger and homelessness. Invite speakers, such as homeless persons to share their experiences, service providers and community speakers. Show videos and distribute fact sheets or other informational material (refer to the National Coalition for the Homeless’ website: [www.nationalhomeless.org](http://www.nationalhomeless.org)).
- Organize a movie night and show one of the movies listed above in the Education section. Have a local business or group donate popcorn.
- Organize a book reading and discussion group. See listed books in the Education section above. Arrange to go into an elementary school and read one of the children’s books and have the teacher facilitate an age-appropriate discussion.
- Register homeless and low-income people to vote.
- Have a booth where people can write to their Congressional representatives about the importance of programs for homeless persons. (See Bread for the World Offering of Letters description included in this packet).
- Organize a drive to collect non-perishable items such as certain foods, hygiene products, clothing, blankets, books, and toys. Involve the community organizations in a competition to see which group can collect the most donations.
- Organize a potluck dinner in which community members bring in a dish for themselves and three other persons. Invite homeless persons as guests in order to encourage community interaction. Remember to choose a neutral site for the dinner — a convenient place with no religious affiliation.
- Sponsor a bake sale. Donate collected money to a local shelter.
- Sponsor a benefit concert with local musicians. Donate collected money to a local shelter.

- Arrange a walk or a run. Have each participant collect sponsorship money; set a minimum, such as \$20 per participant. Donate collected money to a local shelter. Encourage local businesses to donate food and drinks. Encourage local bands to provide entertainment.
- Arrange a Community Service Day where people can volunteer at different local organizations and learn about their activities. Suggested contacts: food pantries, homeless shelters, and soup kitchens.
- Think Globally, Act Locally- Washington, D.C. isn't the only place that lobbying is possible! Gather a group of students and homeless/formerly homeless individuals and visit your city hall, county commission, state legislature and/or a local office of your Congressional representative or Senator. Focus on educating your audience on homelessness issues and what ideas you have to better the situation. Lobbying doesn't have to have a negative connotation, think about what you are doing as merely an educational, hopeful conversation.

All of these ideas leave plenty of room for ingenuity. Take one of these ideas and change it as you see fit, or combine components of multiple ideas, such as:

- Organize a carnival: charge a couple of dollars for admission and/or collect canned foods as admission. Have local businesses donate food, drinks, and other goods or services. Charge very little for each, and donate all proceeds from the event to a local shelter. Have homeless or formerly homeless people attend and speak briefly. Have local bands perform. Have a booth to write letters to Congressional representatives.

A truly successful Awareness Week will inspire people to become further involved with the issues of hunger and homelessness. At the end of this packet is a list of advocacy groups with whom people could work to continue their involvement. These organizations, along with other, local, ideas of how people can become more involved with this issue on a more regular basis, should be advertised throughout your Awareness Week events.



## Media

An important component of National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week is publicity. The outcome of your event will depend largely on your ability to publicize prior to the event. A good use of the media will get people in your community to start thinking about hunger and homelessness and inspire them to take part in the events during the week. In order to get the word out and involve the community as much as possible, you need to alert your local media early on in your organizing process. It is important to notify both campus and community media sources. Let them know about the events of Awareness Week. Urge them to publish/run/air educational information as well as stories from homeless people and social service agencies. Also, have your Awareness Week events published. Radio stations are another effective way to get your message across. Flyers hung up around your campus and your community are another good way to get the word out as well.

One week before National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, step up the publicity to make sure that Awareness Week is on everyone's mind. During the week, continue to work full force with the media to gather as many participants as possible for the events. Please see the sample news release we have included as a guide.

It is helpful to be creative in advertising your activities. Some suggestions are bookmarks, door hangers, posters, or even t-shirts. The graphics department at a local school may be willing to help you create flyers and posters for the events and fact sheets with information about hunger and homelessness.

Distribute your information (fact sheets and overview of the week's events) to community organizations. E-mail can be a great reminder as Awareness Week draws closer. Urge each community organization to participate—interest them in joining a canned food drive, promoting Awareness Week within their organization, and sending at least a few representatives to each event.

Another idea for publicity, which is inexpensive and effective, is to enlist students or community residents to announce Awareness Week and the events to their classes or at work. Professors and employers are usually very supportive of this idea and should not mind giving a couple of minutes of class time to promote National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. If you are on a college campus, using chalk on well-traveled sidewalks is another great way to publicize to a large number of people.

**Make sure you let the National Coalition for the Homeless know about Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week in your community!** NCH might be able to provide you with some publicity support as well. Contact: Michael O'Neill, Director, Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau.

Phone: (202) 462-4822 x222 Email: [moneill@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:moneill@nationalhomeless.org)

## Sample News Release

ATTENTION LOCAL MEDIA  
November 1, 2009

Contact: (Your Name)  
(Local Group Name)  
(123) 555-HHAW

On Tuesday, November 17, 2009, (Local Group Name) will be sponsoring a Faces of Homelessness forum as part of National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. The forum will be held at (place) at (time). The forum will include the following guest speakers:

Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, homeless mother of two living in (your city or state).  
Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, homeless man living in (your city or state).  
Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, director of your city or statewide homeless/housing coalition.  
Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, director of a local shelter in (your city or state).  
\_\_\_\_\_, president of your student hunger/homelessness organization

National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week (November 15-21) is a national endeavor to promote education, action, and awareness about hunger and homelessness. (Local Group Name) is sponsoring this important effort in (your community). Other events include a "One Night Without a Home," (date), a canned food drive, and a Hunger Banquet (date).

For more information, please call (Your Name) at (your number).  
Thank you for your time and attention.

**\*\*Note:** Distribute similar news releases for each of your events. Perhaps you might choose to submit a news release that presents an overview of the entire week and then submit an individual news release for each event.

## **Sample Week**

A major component of scheduling for Awareness Week is to begin with “kick-off” events and work up to the larger events, even if you have only a couple of activities planned for the week. Planning your community’s Awareness Week in this manner allows residents in your community to increase their involvement as the week progresses. By doing this, you should have greater participation for your larger events.

Below is an outline of a possible National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. This sample has been compiled from campuses and communities that have previously held an Awareness Week. Your organization should determine how many and which events will be the most appropriate for your community. In this sample, you might find an event that particularly interests your group. Remember, if you are new to planning a week for hunger and homelessness awareness, one or two focused events will be more effective than five or six marginally organized events.

### **Weekend**

Hold a “Homelessness Saturday or Sunday.” Have religious institutions such as churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques focus their religious services on homelessness/poverty issues.

### **Monday**

Have a kick-off event to start a money-raising or canned food/blanket drive competition.

### **Tuesday**

Faces of Homelessness Speakers’ Panel

### **Wednesday**

“One Night Without a Home” Awareness Sleep Out

### **Thursday**

Oxfam America’s Hunger Banquet and/or Fast for a World Harvest

### **Friday**

1. Think Globally, Act Locally- Washington, D.C. isn’t the only place that lobbying is possible! Gather a group of students and homeless/formerly homeless individuals and visit your city hall, county commission, state legislature and/or a local office of your Congressional representative or Senator. Focus on educating your audience on homelessness issues and what ideas you have to better the situation. Lobbying doesn’t have to have a negative connotation, think about what you are doing as merely an educational, hopeful conversation.

2. End-of-the-week benefit festival. Have local musicians, canned food for admission, donation collection, and information on how people can continue to be involved in hunger and homelessness issues.

### **Saturday**

Organize a group to work at various community service sites as part of Community Service Day. Throughout the week, have sign-up sheets available.

### **Saturday/Sunday**

Set up a Homeless Challenge Project, see below for details.

Throughout the Awareness Week and during the preceding week, information booths to distribute fact sheets and to promote the Awareness Week are very important.

### *Remember!*

During National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, as community members begin to really think about hunger and homelessness issues, it is crucial that you provide information on how they can take action after Awareness Week has concluded. Provide them with the following information and any other material that you believe is important for your own community.

- The name, address, email, and phone number of a local shelter at which they can volunteer.
- The names, addresses and phone numbers of local, state, and national coalitions and advocacy groups which they can join. Contact the national organizations listed at the end of this packet to be referred to their local affiliates.
- Information about writing Members of Congress.
- Information about Alternative Breaks, which allow community members to spend a weeklong break doing service. Call **BreakAway at (800) 903-0646** for more information.

### *Wrap-Up*

When National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week has concluded, there will still be a few loose ends that you will need to tie up. First, remember to send thank you letters to all of your contacts and your support network. You or other Awareness Week organizers will probably refer to these same people in the future. Also, meet with your team to discuss what went right and what went wrong during Awareness Week. Make sure everyone evaluates their own project, as well as how they viewed Awareness Week as a whole. Gather these individual and group evaluations to comprise a resource folder—one that you and other groups will be able to refer to in following years. This resource will allow you to have a foundation upon which to build your future Awareness Weeks. **Finally, contact the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Student Campaign Against Hunger & Homelessness and let them know how your Awareness Week was received by the community — send us newspaper clippings, posters, commentary and other news!** Have fun!

## **Faces of Homelessness Panel**

### ***What is a Faces Panel?***

A Faces Panel provides an opportunity for dialogue between homeless or formerly homeless persons with those who want to learn more about homelessness. The Panel members speak about their experiences and answer questions from the audience.

### ***Why do a Faces Panel?***

The Faces Panel makes a very powerful impact on those who attend. People are provided with a personal connection to the homeless statistics that they have heard. Myths can be dispelled and stereotypes can be broken down as the audience gets a chance to interact with homeless people. Audience members can listen to the perspectives and stories of those who are homeless and hear their ideas for solutions to hunger and homelessness issues.

The National Coalition for the Homeless has three videos/DVDs available.

1. The highly regarded "Faces of Homelessness I" video features images of America's homeless people. This 13-minute video (VHS or DVD) features images taken by award-winning photographers from around the country accompanied with powerful homeless-themed music that enables the viewer to get a sense of who is homeless in America. Cost: \$20 (includes S&H).
2. "Faces of Homelessness II" DVD was done by a trio of student filmmakers who interviewed a number of homeless people in the nation's capital. (DVD only). Cost: \$20 (includes S & H).
3. "The National Coalition for the Homeless: Bringing America Home" DVD was sponsored by the Homewood Suites by Hilton. A short documentary that outlines the history and promotes the work of the National Coalition for the Homeless. Contact the National Coalition for the Homeless for more information if you wish to obtain a copy.

### ***Tips for Recruiting Homeless People as Speakers:***

- 1) If you know homeless people who would like to speak, ask them directly.
- 2) Send letters to your local shelters asking them if someone from their shelter would like to speak. It's good to get a few "success stories" of people who are no longer homeless, as well as stories of people who are currently homeless. If you contact the shelter, you need to make follow-up calls to make sure the speakers will come. Sometimes shelters are not willing to let their clients speak. Shelters that house women fleeing domestic abuse, families, or youth, often want their clients to concentrate on their own problems and are sometimes overly protective. If possible, organize a diverse group of speakers (age, race, sex, homeless/formerly homeless).
- 3) Make sure to arrange transportation for your speakers; this can include giving them bus/cab fare or simply picking them up. Sometimes the shelter will assign a staff member/volunteer to transport the client to and from the event.
- 4) Make sure to contact the shelter and inform them that a resident will be speaking on your campus, and ensure that the speaker(s) will not lose their beds for the night if they return late.



5) Be sure to compensate the homeless/formerly homeless speakers with an honorarium: \$35-\$50 is a suggested amount for local speakers, but feel free to give more.

6) Invite the homeless speakers to eat in your school cafeteria before the event.

***Other:***

1) Make sure to get the community and campus media to cover the event. Consider videotaping the panel.

2) To get the speakers started, meet with them beforehand and ask that they address the following in their talk: if they are formerly homeless — what their life was like before homelessness, what their life was like while they were homeless, what brought them out of homelessness, and how their life is currently. If the speakers are currently homeless, have them share what their life was like before homelessness, what it is like to be homeless, and what are their hopes and dreams are for the future. Ideally, each speaker should talk for 10-15 minutes.

3) Take questions from the floor. Let the audience know that no question is too stupid or embarrassing. You should mention that some speakers will get a little emotional or riled up if posed with certain questions. Expect tears when people are asked about their contact/relationships with family. Francine, a speaker for the National Coalition for the Homeless, invited a student to give her a hug after the student said, with tears running down her face, that she was sorry that her mother gave her the wrong perception of homeless people. Another speaker, John, wrote a song about being homeless and not one eye in a room is dry after it is performed.

4) Obtain a moderator to introduce the speakers. This moderator should be someone that knows about homelessness on a local or national level. It is sometimes hard for homeless people to relate to people with homes, and vice versa. Therefore, it is necessary for the moderator to act as a bridge between the two. The moderator can also interject statistics and other important information in between the stories of the speakers. Generally, the moderator is a local advocate who is working with a local homeless organization.

For more information, contact **Michael O'Neill** with the National Coalition for the Homeless at (202) 462-4822 x222 or [moneill@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:moneill@nationalhomeless.org)



## **“One Night Without a Home”**

“One Night Without a Home” Awareness Sleep Out takes place nationally during Awareness Week.

The “One Night” is an opportunity for residents to spend a night outside to discuss, think, and learn about homelessness. Although one night outside can in no way simulate homelessness, this awareness-raising activity can promote advocacy, protest, and education.

***Duration:* About 12 hours, such as from 7 p.m. until morning.**

### ***Format***

- Develop your mission statement. Address the questions of who, what, where, when, and why?
- Make sure to receive permission right away from your city or county officials and community/school administrators concerning location, security, and other logistics.
- Invite homeless people, community leaders, residents and community spokespersons to speak.
- Choose an appropriate site (central to community activities).
- Ask local businesses for donations (food, drinks, supplies, money).
- Ask other groups to co-sponsor the event, such as organizations (e.g. Food Not Bombs, Habitat for Humanity) that can serve food to homeless guests.
- Prepare group discussion topics that will promote interaction among all participants.
- Begin the night with a vigil or a march to draw attention, and participants, to the event.
- Include information for participants to act upon what they've learned (community service, letter writing, advocacy organizations).
- In the morning, allow time for participants to share their thoughts and concerns.

### ***Sample Agenda***

6:00 p.m.	Gather participants and provide transportation for homeless guests
7:00 p.m.	Serve coffee and/or a meal
8:00 p.m.	Speakers/candlelight vigil/music
9:00 p.m.	Discussion groups
11:00 p.m.	Late night food line/music
7:00 a.m.	Breakfast /closing remarks/wrap-up

### *Additional suggestions*

- Be mindful of what you bring. Keep in mind the situation that you are simulating; do not bring any objects or goodies that those without a home mostly likely lack. Do not bring stereos or a portable television or DVD players. Try to stay away from obviously having pizza delivered or offering alcoholic beverages.
- Contact local shelters or homeless advocates about bringing homeless people to your event. Ask these contacts to participate in the Night as well.
- Ask local musicians to play. Music brings people together.
- Distribute fact sheets and information about hunger and homelessness and the other events for Awareness Week.
- Make sure to recruit a lot of people to participate in your early planning stages. Ask homeless/formerly homeless people, students, faculty, and community members.
- Invite the media.
- Post a list of rules on the night of the event. These may include: 1) no drugs or alcohol, 2) do not interrupt those who are speaking, 3) respect all views, 4) do not leave the site. Also, post and announce the agenda, people in charge, bathroom locations, indoor sites, food and first aid stations. You may choose to put a container out for donations. Have a facilitator to mediate any disputes that may arise.
- Set aside some time for group discussion about hunger and homelessness in your community and/or in our nation. Provide paper and pencils for people to jot down their ideas. This is a good time to promote future projects, such as a day of fasting.

### ***Wrap-Up***

Appoint a committee to draft a group resolution based on the discussions that night. Establish a common ground for participants who would like to take future action. Collect names, phone numbers, and email addresses of people for future reference and provide access to information on local service sites.

For more information, contact **Michael O'Neill** with the National Coalition for the Homeless at (202) 462-4822 x222 or [moneill@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:moneill@nationalhomeless.org)



## **Homeless Challenge Project**

Challenge the people and leaders of your community to take a Homeless Challenge, a life-altering experience with the power to effect change. This program asks individuals from economically privileged backgrounds to give up every day things (i.e. cell phones, warm bed, and shelter), and live on the streets as a person experiencing homelessness. The experience can last as long as one might like, but typically runs for 48 hours.

The Homeless Challenge serves as an educational tool providing awareness to those who participate. While a participant certainly cannot experience homelessness entirely, when a bed and food awaits them at home, the Challenge does offer new insight into the life of a person without a home – waiting in soup lines, walking great distances to access services, feeling ‘invisible’ to those who are not homeless.

### ***How to Begin***

- For a detailed manual about the Homeless Challenge as coordinated by the National Coalition for the Homeless in Washington, DC contact:

**Jonathan Bell**

Director, Homeless Challenge Project

National Coalition for the Homeless

2201 P St., NW

Washington, DC 20037-1033

Phone: (202) 462-4822 x 230; Fax: (202) 462-4823

Email: [jbell@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:jbell@nationalhomeless.org)

Website: [www.nationalhomeless.org](http://www.nationalhomeless.org)

- The Homeless Challenge works best if coordinated with guides (either currently homeless or formerly homeless peoples) who can stay throughout the night with participants for security reasons. Make sure to recruit enough guides such that each guide stays with a maximum of four participants to avoid large crowds which might draw attention. In addition, a small ratio of guides to participants allows for each participant to partake in genuine conversation with a person who is experiencing or has experienced homelessness, as well as share their day’s experiences with their guide and with the other participants.

*Contact local shelters for recommendations of potential guides and to notify staff of your plans. For contact information of local shelters or homeless coalitions, contact the National Coalition for the Homeless.*

Remember to offer an honorarium to your guides – i.e. \$50 per guide, per night.

### ***Personal Preparation Tips***

- Dress in your worst clothes. Clothing should be old and comfortable, items that you won't mind getting dirty. A warm coat is a great idea. Make sure to layer your clothing.
- Bring along one piece of ID and bury it in your sock
- Wear no jewelry or watches.
- Refrain from taking a shower for at least two days before beginning the challenge. No cologne, deodorant or use of scented soap. Rub unscented baby oil into your hair to make it look as though your hair hasn't been washed in some time.  
For men: don't shave for five days before starting the plunge.
- Wear extra layers of clothes even if it is warm out. Homeless people wear extra clothes as they have no place to store clothes in the daytime and it keeps them warm at night.
- Wear roughed-up old shoes.
- Bring along a sheet of cardboard to use as a mattress.
- Bring along an old blanket. Sleeping bags are okay, such as the flannel ones, but do not use state-of-the-art down sleeping bags. A sheet of plastic or a black garbage bag will also be useful in case of rain or snow.
- Women are encouraged to bring along sanitary napkins, as shelters do not always have these items available for free.
- Bring along a pack of cigarettes, plus matches, to share with homeless people. Giving someone a cigarette is a good way to start a conversation. You are more than welcome to refrain from smoking, yourself.

### ***Activities to Take Part in During Your Homeless Challenge Experience***

- Talk with and listen to other homeless people
- Beg for money. Asking for money is about giving someone the opportunity to do a good deed. Challenge participants are sometimes reluctant to do this. We're taught that nothing in life is free, that it's better not to ask people for anything. Panhandle rich and poor alike. You're likely to get a better response from the so-called "working poor". Split up, but keep your partner in sight. Panhandle for at least two hours. Re-group to see who was the most successful and what techniques worked best. You may give the money that you collect to your guide or homeless people that you meet on the street.
- Sleep outside. Don't expect to get much sleep as the police might chase you off.

- **Do not stay in shelters** as you may be taking away a bed from someone who really needs it. Sleep outside, regardless of the weather, with the unsheltered homeless. However, hang out in, or in front of, shelters, day centers or religious missions to get to know your fellow homeless people.
- Go into cafeterias and fast food restaurants to look for food scraps left on the tables. Don't ask for permission from the manager. Use a plastic bag. Eat the food and stay in the facility until the manager runs you out.
- Go to restaurants and ask if you could sweep the sidewalk for a sandwich.
- Go into restaurants, hotels, office buildings and ask if you could use the restroom.
- Eat your meals at local soup kitchens. In most cities finding food is a relatively easy endeavor so don't worry about eating food meant for homeless people, as there is plenty of food to be found while on the streets. Even if you are not hungry, go to the soup kitchens anyway. This will allow you to interact with other homeless people and familiarize yourself with the various food programs in the city.
- Many religious missions nationwide still require homeless people to attend services as a condition for getting a meal or a bed for the night. To feel how homeless people are treated by religious institutions, sit in on a mandatory religious service.
- Find a highly visible place to sleep (e.g. park bench, heat grate, bus stop bench). Go to these places late at night to guarantee you are not taking away someone's favorite spot. If this somehow happens, give up your spot and move somewhere else. Have your partner stay awake at all times. Do this in two-hour shifts.
- Go dumpster diving in search of food and recyclable materials. You might be shocked by the "abundance from the streets." Watch out for needles. Use a stick instead of your hands. If you must use your hands, borrow a pair of work gloves.
- Apply for work at fast food restaurants. Tell them you live in a well-known shelter or live on the streets. Tell them that you don't have an address, but you are willing to come back daily to find out if there are any job openings.

## ***Candidate Challenge***

When planning a Homeless Challenge, join with local advocates, activists and currently or formerly homeless people to extend the Challenge to political candidates, incumbents, and public officials. Contact these local, state, and national political figures to offer them a chance to see how public policy directly affects the homeless and low-income people. In the end, this program might garner the necessary political will to end poverty and homelessness in the United States.

For the Candidate Homeless Challenge, possible alternatives include:

**Homeless Challenge (Short Version):** Same as the above, but anywhere from *12 to 24 hours*. Participants are asked to eat at soup kitchens and panhandle. Candidates would have a guide with them for the duration, staying mindful of the guide's daily experiences. We suggest that this challenge be taken during the night.

**Listening Session:** Candidates/public officials, homeless/formerly homeless persons, service providers, and/or advocates sit down and have a moderated, frank discussion about such things as public policy, homelessness/poverty issues, etc., as well as the root causes and solutions to homelessness/poverty with those people who can create change.

**“Walk a Mile in My Shoes”:** Participants are paired with a homeless or formerly homeless person and will spend half of the day, or the entire day, together doing such things as having lunch at a soup kitchen, going to a day-labor office, sharing where they sleep for the night, or just trying to access social services. This is an opportunity for the participant to share quality time with someone who is homeless, someone that will share their struggles and hardships of life on the streets.

*For more information please contact:*

Jonathan Bell

Phone: (202) 462-4822

E-mail: [jbell@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:jbell@nationalhomeless.org)



## **Fast for a World Harvest**

Oxfam America's *Fast for a World Harvest* is a great way to involve a number of community members and to promote education. Oxfam America is a privately funded, nonsectarian organization that fights global poverty and hunger. The agency works with and helps support grassroots groups that advocate for long-term improvements in Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Caribbean. Oxfam America also works closely with U.S. policy issues that affect poverty and community-based efforts on a national and international scale. In addition, Oxfam America provides public education on hunger and poverty.

On the day of the event, community members will be asked to give up a meal, and your community food service will donate a portion of the cost of that meal to Oxfam America. Please note that the food service will not be able to donate the full cost, in most cases, since they still need to pay kitchen staff.

### **Steps**

- First, contact a place to hold the Fast. Explain the *Fast for a World Harvest* and Oxfam America. Establish a relationship with the food service business by asking what the company needs from your organization in order to make the Fast successful.
- Start early. Begin planning and organizing at least 4-8 weeks before the event. Be sure to call Oxfam America (see toll-free number below).
- Choose an appropriate date during National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week.
- Recruit co-sponsors, volunteers, and faculty members.
- Publicize through news releases (see sample enclosed in this packet), posters, brochures and information tables. Ask a high-profile community figure to join your effort.
- Obtain educational materials from Oxfam America to have at the event (free audiovisuals and printed materials).
- After the Fast, send thank you letters to the food service staff and other contributors. Tell them to include their names and contact information with their donations to Oxfam America. Make sure you receive a photocopy of the check for your records.
- Evaluate your event. Record what went well and what did not for future reference.

### **Questions to Ask the Dining Hall Director**

- When does the dining hall need to know the number of participants? (To make sure that the food service does not prepare excess meals).
- How many meals can people choose to give up?
- How much money will the food service donate to Oxfam America for each meal? (Donations have ranged from \$1.50 to \$8.50 — they add up quickly!).

If you are interested in this event, please call:

**Oxfam America**

*Attn: Fast Team*

226 Causeway Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor

Boston, MA 02114

Email: [fast@oxfamamerica.org](mailto:fast@oxfamamerica.org),

Toll Free: 800-77-OXFAM (800-776-9326) Fax: (617) 728-2594

Website: [www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org)



## Hunger Banquet

Another useful fund/awareness-raising event recommend by Oxfam America is a Hunger Banquet. An Oxfam America Hunger Banquet dramatizes the unequal distribution of food in the world. The Banquet will leave many people hungry, some with just enough to eat and very few with full stomachs. Money is raised through a standard admission charge for the event and/or by gathering donations.

Hunger Banquet participants are randomly assigned to one of three socio-economic levels that represent proportional global standards-of-living. Out of every 100 people, 15 enjoy a full-course meal complete with royal treatment, 25 sit in a simple setting and eat a meager meal (such as rice and beans), and the remaining 60 share rice, without utensils, while sitting on the floor.

### Steps

- First, call **Oxfam America at 800-77-OXFAM**. The Fast Team will provide you with materials and help you organize a Hunger Banquet!
- Gather interested people in your Awareness Week team to help co-coordinate the event.
- Establish a time and place. For example, school cafeterias and student unions are ideal locations, but will require agreements with the administration and dining service.
- Invite local celebrities to the event—local media stars will generate publicity and greater public response!
- Ask local restaurants to donate food.
- Send invitations with RSVPs. The invitations should include endorsers, special guests, and sponsors.
- Prepare the materials for the event. These materials include fact sheets for guests (you can get information about global hunger from Oxfam America), menus, posters, a program for the event (check with Oxfam America for a suggested script), and colored or numbered tickets (15% high-income, 25% middle-income, and 60% low-income).
- Publicize! Send out news releases and use other publicity strategies (see the media section in this packet) to gather as many participants as possible.
- Make sure all the food and table arrangements are in order.
- On the day of the banquet, set up the room accordingly. Make sure the first group has an elaborate setting and service, while the third group has only the bare essentials.
- Make sure every person takes a ticket at the front door and begin!

A Hunger Banquet is a great, interactive way to generate discussion and thought about world hunger. Distribute factual material for people to take home and share with others.

For more information about this event, please contact:

**Oxfam America**

*Attn: Fast Team*

226 Causeway Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor

Boston, MA 02114

Email: [fast@oxfamamerica.org](mailto:fast@oxfamamerica.org),

Toll Free: 800-77-OXFAM (800-776-9326) Fax: (617) 728-2594

Website: [www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org)



## Offering of Letters

Bread for the World is an advocacy organization which lobbies for public policies that address the needs of hungry and poor people in our nation and around the world. Each year, Bread for the World sponsors an Offering of Letters campaign. In this campaign, participants write letters to Members of Congress in order to impact policy decisions. Contact Bread for the World for their specific focus for this year, 2009.

- Publicize extensively before the actual letter writing campaign. As with other events during National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, send out news releases, post flyers, and utilize other media. This way, community members will know both locations and times to either write a letter or drop one off.
- Decide when you would like to have an Offering of Letters campaign during Awareness Week. Some communities set up a booth for one day, while other communities have distributed letter writing information following the events during Awareness Week.
- Find names and contact information of Congressional representatives for your district.
- Ask local businesses and sponsors to buy postage, envelopes, pens, and paper.
- Handwritten letters are best; draft a sample letter that community members can replicate - please contact Bread for the World for sample letters. Some community members may have never written to their Congressional representatives so make this experience as convenient and straightforward as possible to encourage successive letter writing.
- Provide information about hunger and homelessness during the letter writing so that community members can include compelling statistics/facts in their letters on the need for supportive legislation. You can obtain this information from Bread for the World (see below for contact info).
- Urge community members to continue their political action through voting, by writing letters to, calling, and visiting local Congressional representatives.

To receive an Offering of Letters kit and more information about Bread for the World, please contact:

### **Bread for the World**

50 F Street, NW, # 500

Washington, DC 20001

phone: (202) 639-9400 and (800) 82-BREAD

Fax: (202) 639-9401

Email: [bread@bread.org](mailto:bread@bread.org)

Website: [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)

\* Bread for the World's 2009 Offering of Letters will press the new Congress and the new administration to fix U.S. foreign aid to make it more effective in reducing hunger and poverty.

## **Organizational Contacts**

The following includes a list of national organizations that could provide you further information and support for organizing National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week in your community.

### **Bread for the World**

50 F Street, NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20001  
Phone: (202) 639-9400 and (800) 82-BREAD  
Fax: (202) 639-9401  
Email: [bread@bread.org](mailto:bread@bread.org)  
Website: [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)  
(Offering of Letters)

### **Break Away**

2451 Cumberland Parkway  
Suite 3124  
Atlanta, GA 30339  
Toll Free (800)-903-0646  
Email: [breakaway@alternativebreaks.org](mailto:breakaway@alternativebreaks.org)  
Website: [www.alternativebreaks.org](http://www.alternativebreaks.org)  
(Alternative Breaks)

### **Church World Service**

28606 Phillips Street  
P.O. Box 968  
Elkhart, IN 46515  
Email: [info@churchworldservice.org](mailto:info@churchworldservice.org)  
Phone: 574-264-3102  
Toll Free: 1-800-297-1516  
Fax: (574) 262-0966  
(CROP Walk)

### **Habitat for Humanity**

Contact affiliates in your area.

Information can be found at: [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org)

Email: [publicinfo@hfhi.org](mailto:publicinfo@hfhi.org)

\*For information about youth or collegiate volunteering: [www.habitatyouthprograms.org](http://www.habitatyouthprograms.org).

(Building/Renovating Homes)

### **Oxfam America**

Oxfam America  
Attn: Fast Team  
226 Causeway St., 5th Floor  
Boston, MA 02114  
Toll Free: 800-77-OXFAM (800-776-9326)  
Fax: (617) 728-2594  
Email: [fast@oxfamamerica.org](mailto:fast@oxfamamerica.org)  
Website: [www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org)  
(Fast for a World Harvest and Hunger Banquet)

**National Coalition for the Homeless**

2201 P St., NW

Washington, DC 20037-1033

Phone: (202) 462-4822 x222 (Michael O'Neill)

(202) 462-4822 x230 (Jonathan Bell—Homeless Challenge Only)

Fax: (202) 462-4823

Email: moneill@nationalhomeless.org

jbell@nationalhomeless.org

Website: www.nationalhomeless.org

**Contact Michael O'Neill about “One Night Without a Home”-Awareness Sleep Out, Faces of Homelessness, and for suggestions on bringing local, state or national speakers to your community and/or campus.**

**Contact Jonathan Bell about the various challenges in the Homeless Challenge Project.**

**National Student Campaign Against Hunger & Homelessness**

National Organizing Office:

407 S. Dearborn, Suite 701

Chicago, IL 60605

Phone: (312) 291-0349 x302

Fax: (312) 275-7150

Website: www.studentsagainsthunger.org

Contact: Stacey Hafner, Organizing Director at  
stacey@studentsagainsthunger.org



**National Hunger and Homelessness  
Awareness Week Registration Form  
November 15-21, 2009**

To better assist your programs for Awareness Week, we ask every campus/community to fill out this registration form in advance of your event. We will be able to offer assistance and to put you in touch with other schools and community organizations in your area that are planning to participate.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
SCHOOL or ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_  
OFFICE ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
HOME ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
OFFICE PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ HOME PHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
BEST TIME TO REACH \_\_\_\_\_  
FAX \_\_\_\_\_  
EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_  
WEBSITE \_\_\_\_\_  
ADVISOR'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

**Has your school/organization planned a National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness week in the past?**

**If so, for how many years and what have you done? Please list specific highlights.**

**Please circle the events that you plan to participate in:**

Faces of Homelessness Panel	Hunger Banquet
"One Night Without a Home" Awareness Sleep Out	Offering of Letters
Fast for a World Harvest	Homeless Challenge Project

**Please list other events you have planned for the Week:**

**Please return this form to:**

National Coalition for the Homeless  
c/o Michael O'Neill  
2201 P St., NW  
Washington, DC 20037-1033  
Phone: (202) 462-4822 x222  
Fax: (202) 462-4823  
Email: moneill@nationalhomeless.org  
Website: www.nationalhomeless.org